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# Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-03

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /004 R

66603
DRAFTED BY: AF/N:DLMACK
APPROVED BY: AF/N: JJBLAKE
---------- 118361
O 161649Z JAN 74
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 009484

FOLL REPEAT TUNIS 271 ACTION SECSTATE 16 JANUARY QUOTE

O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 271

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR' TS' US
SUBJECT: MASMOUDI ALLEGATIONS THAT USG INVOLVED
IN HIS OUSTER

REF: TUNIS 234

1. WE NOTE THAT GOT EX-FONMIN MASMOUDI IS CONTINUING SEE FOREIGN PRESS AND ALLEGING THAT USG INVOLVED IN HIS OUSTER BECAUSE OF PAST DISPLEASURE WITH HIS POLICIES ON CHINA, NORTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. THESE ALLEGATIONS MAY NEVER APPEAR IN LOCAL PRESS, BUT THEY WILL CERTAINLY GAIN CURRENCY ABROAD AND BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE HERE. (RANDAL STORY OF JAN. 14 MENTIONED IN TUNIS 234, WHICH APPEARS IN JAN. 15 PARIS HERALD TRIBUNE, IS ALREADY AVAILABLE LOCALLY).

2. WE ARE CONCERNED WITH THIS DEVELOPMENT AND BELIEVE WE SHOULD CONSIDER POSSIBLE WAYS TO COUNTERACT IT. MOST DESIRABLE WOULD BE FOR RESPONSIBLE GOT SENIOR OFFICIAL MAKE SOME KIND OF STATEMENT LAYING MATTER TO REST. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE FOR DEPT. SPOKESMAN TO DENY USG INVOLVED IN OUSTER OF MASMOUDI.
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3. PROBLEM WITH FIRST ALTERNATIVE IS THAT GOT FOR OWN

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REASONS MAY NOT WISH DISCUSS ANY ASPECT OF MASMOUDI'S
DISMISSAL IN PUBLIC AT THIS TIME -- PARTICULARLY SINCE
IT QUITE POSSIBLE THAT BOURGUIBA, WHETHER OR NOT HE
BELIEVED IT, DID ALLEGE USG DISPLEASURE WHEN HE TOLD MASMOUDI
HE WAS BEING FIRED. THEREFORE, ANY STATEMENT BY HIGH GOT
OFFICIAL MIGHT RUN RISK OF CONTRADICTING PRESIDENT. NONE-
THELESS, I BELIEVE I SHOULD REQUEST URGENT SESSION WITH
NEWLY-APPOINTED FONMIN CHATTI TO REGISTER USG'S CONCERN WITH
REPORTS IN FOREIGN PRESS AND AT LEAST TO ASK GOT CLARIFY
MATTER PUBLICLY.

4. PROBLEM WITH STATEMENT BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN IS THAT,
APART FROM OUR COMMENTING PUBLICLY WHEN GOT HAS NOT,
UNLIKELY THAT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT WOULD BE CARRIED BY
MEDIA LOCALLY. NONETHELESS, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD MAKE ATTEMPT
SET RECORD STRAIGHT EVEN THOUGH IMPACT HERE MAY BE MARGINAL.

5. ACTION REQUESTED:

A. DEPARTMENT'S APPROVAL FOR ME TO REGISTER
CONCERN WITH CHATTI.

B. DENIAL BY DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN, IN ANSWER TO
QUESTION, THAT USG INVOLVED IN OUSTER OF MASMOUDI.
SEELYE
UNQUOTE
RUSH

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